

Message Text

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LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AID-05 CEA-01 EA-10 FRB-03
NEA-10 USIA-06 OPIC-03 SP-02 TRSE-00 AGRE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3216
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
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USMISSION USNATO
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USEEC AND USOECD ALSO FOR EMBASSIES

E.O. 11652 N.A.
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: LABOR PLANT ELECTIONS: THE FIRST WEEK

REF: MADRID 149
1. SUMMARY. A LACK OF RELIABLE ELECTION RESULTS HAS LED
TO CONFUSING AND CONTRADICTORY INFORMATION AS THE FIRST
WEEK OF THE SCHEDULED THREE-WEEK PLANT ELECTION PERIOD
ENDED. ALTHOUGH POLITICAL INTEREST IS RUNNING HIGH,
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THE GOVT HAS PERSISTED IN DOWNPLAYING THE ELECTIONS.
ONE NEWS AGENCY SHOWS THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED SWC LEADING
THE SOCIALIST UGT TWO TO ONE, BUT THE LATTER UNION
HAS WON IMPORTANT ELECTIONS IN SOME OF SPAIN'S LARGEST
PLANTS. A PLEASANT SURPRISE HAS BEEN THE EXCELLENT
SHOWING OF THE BASQUE STV IN THE FOUR BASQUE PROVINCES.
SOME OF THE SMALL SO-CALLED "INDEPENDENT" CENTER-ORIENTED

UNIONS ARE MAKING THEIR PRESENCE FELT IN A MINOR WAY. IT IS STILL DOUBTFUL THAT THESE "PARTIAL" ELECTIONS WILL SETTLE THE POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE UGT AND THE SWC. WHILE THE UGT MAY IN FACT "WIN" IN THE BIG PLANTS, THEY HAVE AN UPHILL BATTLE TO WIN OVERALL. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH SOME INTERESTING TRENDS HAVE BECOME APPARENT AFTER THE FIRST WEEK OF THE SCHEDULED THREE-WEEK PLANT ELECTION PERIOD, THERE IS A LACK OF RELIABLE ELECTION RESULTS - A SITUATION FOR WHICH THE GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE A GOOD PART OF THE BLAME. WHILE INTEREST IN THESE FIRST FREE LABOR ELECTIONS IN 40 YEARS IS GENERALLY RUNNING HIGH AND THE PRESS IS GIVING THEM CONSIDERABLE SPACE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS PERSISTED IN DOWNPLAYING THEM. ONLY AFTER THE NATION'S TOP LABOR REPORTERS ON JANUARY 20 PUBLICLY TOOK THE MINISTER OF LABOR TO TASK FOR NOT COMPILING AND MAKING AVAILABLE THE RESULTS ON A NATIONAL SCALE (AND FOR "TRYING TO AVOID THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS"), DID THE LABOR MINISTRY BELATEDLY PROMISE "TO FACILITATE INFORMATION ON THE LABOR ELECTIONS". THIS WILL PROBABLY BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE MINISTRY'S 52 PROVINCIAL LABOR DELEGATES, WHO ARE CHARGED WITH RECEIVING ELECTION RESULTS FROM THE PARTICIPATING PLANTS IN THEIR PROVINCES. IN THE MEANTIME, OVERALL ELECTION FIGURES HAVE BEEN HIGHLY CONFUSING, WITH THE SOCIALIST UGT AND THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS' COMMISSIONS

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(SWC) BOTH CLAIMING TO BE IN FIRST PLACE AFTER THE INITIAL POLLING. OVER THE WEEKEND, THE CIFRA NEWS AGENCY ISSUED THE FOLLOWING PRELIMINARY RANK-ORDER STANDING (FAR FROM AUTHORITATIVE) BASED ON ITS SOURCES: SWC 41 PERCENT, UGT 21 PERCENT, INDEPENDENTS 11 PERCENT, BASQUE STV 9 PERCENT, INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST USO (ANTI-MERGER FACTION) 7 PERCENT, MAOIST SU 5 PERCENT, AND MARXIST-LENINIST CSUT 1 PERCENT (THE ANARCHO-SYNDICAL CNT IS BOYCOTTING THE ELECTIONS). AMCONSUL SEVILLA REPORTS THAT AS OF JANUARY 23, PRELIMINARY RESULTS HAVE THE SWC LEADING THE UGT BY A 2 TO 1 MARGIN.

3. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE UGT HAS BEEN DOING BETTER IN THE LARGER PLANTS (WHERE THE "CLOSED LIST" OR UNION LIST SYSTEM PREVAILS). THUS, THE UGT DEFEATED THE SWC IN THE LATTER'S COAL-MINING STRONGHOLD OF HUNDOSA (25,000 WORKERS), AND ALSO WON AT U.S. STEEL'S ALTOS HORNOS PLANT NEAR BILBAO. AS A MATTER OF FACT, LOOKING AT THE BIG PLANTS IN THE BASQUE AREA, THE UGT IS IN FIRST PLACE WITH 26 PERCENT, FOLLOWED BY STV (25 PERCENT) AND SWC (17 PERCENT). WE SHALL BE PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO OTHER LARGE PLANT ELECTIONS AS THEY COME UP.

4. VERY BRIEFLY, THE UGT AND THE SWC HAVE BEEN STRESSING THE FOLLOWING CAMPAIGN LINES. THE UGT HAS BEEN ADVERTISING ITSELF AS THE SOCIALIST TRADE UNION OF SPAIN, ENJOYING "FRATERNAL RELATIONS" WITH THE PSOE. IT OBVIOUSLY HOPES THAT SOME OF THE PSOE'S ELECTORAL MAGIC WILL RUB OFF ON THE UGT, AND TO THAT END PSOE SECGEN FELIPE GONZALEZ IS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ("THE SUCCESS OF THE PSOE IS TIED TO THAT OF THE UGT IN THESE ELECTIONS," GONZALEZ HAS DECLARED). THE UGT IS ALSO GOING ALL OUT TO PIN THE "COMMUNIST UNION" LABEL ON THE SWC. IN RESPONSE, THE SWC IS PUSHING ITS "EXPERIENCE, EFFICIENCY, AND RESPONSIBILITY", ITS "YEARS OF OPPOSITION TO DICTATORSHIP), AND ITS ROLE AS A UNIFYING AGENT OF ALL THE

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WORKING CLASS. PCE LEADER SANTIAGO CARRILLO, IN A JANUARY 21 INTERVIEW, WHILE ADMITTING THAT THE COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN SWC WAS "REAL", STRESSED THAT MANY NON-COMMUNIST WORKERS ALSO BELONGED TO THE UNION. HE REPEATED THE THEME THAT THERE SHOULD BE "ONE SOLE LABOR ORGANIZATION" FOR ALL WORKERS.

5. ONE OF THE PLEASANT SURPRISES HAS BEEN THE EXCELLENT SHOWING OF THE STV IN THE BASQUE AREA. MANY OBSERVERS

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HAD INITIALLY DOUBTED THAT THE SMALL, BASICALLY NON-POLITICAL, BREAD-AND-BUTTER BASQUE UNION COULD COMPETE WITH THE BIG BOYS. EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION AND HARD WORK HAVE OBVIOUSLY PAID OFF, HOWEVER, FOR AMCONSUL BILBAO REPORTS THAT INITIAL ESTIMATES SHOW THE STV CURRENTLY LEADING IN THE BASQUE REGION WITH 28 PERCENT OF THE ELECTED PLANT DELEGATES, FOLLOWED BY SWC WITH 22 PERCENT, AND UGT WITH 20 PERCENT. WHILE THE STV MAY ULTIMATELY NOT BE ABLE TO HANG ON TO ITS EARLY LEAD IN THE FOUR BASQUE PROVINCES, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS A PRIME LABOR FORCE IN THAT REGION.

6. SEVERAL OTHER EVENTS MAY BE INDICATORS OF FUTURE TRENDS. THE SMALL SO-CALLED "INDEPENDENT" AND CENTER-ORIENTED TRADE UNIONS (WHICH THE LEFT DESCRIBES AS "YELLOW") HAVE BEEN RUNNING CANDIDATES IN SCATTERED PLANTS AND HAVE MADE THEIR PRESENCE FELT. ON JANUARY 17, TWO OF THESE - THE CGT AND THE CTC - FORMED AN ELECTORAL ALLIANCE WHICH MAY PAY DIVIDENDS. THE LARGEST OF THE "INDEPENDENT" GROUP, THE CDT, PULLED OFF A SURPRISING VICTORY AT THE CITROEN PLANT IN VIGO (WITH 8,000 PLUS WORKERS, THE LARGEST PLANT IN GALICIA) AS IT OUT-POLLED THE UGT IN A CLOSE RACE, WITH SWC IN THIRD PLACE.

7. COMMENT. THE GOVERNMENT IS BEING FORCED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE TRADE UNIONS' PLANT ELECTIONS ARE PROVOKING CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL INTEREST. AND YET IT IS STILL DOUBTFUL THAT THESE ELECTIONS WILL SETTLE THE POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE UGT AND THE SWC. BY GOVT DECREE THE ELECTIONS ARE "PARTIAL" IN NATURE, AND THERE ARE AS YET NO STATISTICS TO SHOW WHAT PERCENTAGE

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OF THE 6 MILLION ELIGIBLE VOTERS WILL IN FACT BE
PARTICIPATING (SOME 2 MILLION WORKERS IN ESTABLISHMENTS
OF UNDER 6 EMPLOYEES ARE INELIGIBLE). AGRICULTURAL
WORKERS ARE ALSO EXCLUDED, WHICH MEANS THAT IN PROVINCES
SUCH AS CASTELLON IN THE LEVANTE, ALMOST ONE HALF OF
THE WORKERS WILL NOT BE PARTICIPATING.

8. IN A SPECIAL ADVANCE EDITION JANUARY 23, LEFT
CENTER WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE CAMBIO 16 FEATURES UGT
SECGEN NICOLAS REDONDO ON THE COVER GIVING THE V FOR
VICTORY SIGN AND DECLARING "WE SHALL WIN". THE UGT
MAY IN FACT "WIN" IN THE ADMITTEDLY IMPORTANT "BIG
PLANTS", BUT IT LOOKS LIKE AN UPHILL BATTLE IF THEY ARE
TO WIN OVERALL. THE PSOE HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT
THE UGT WILL BE HAPPY TO BREAK EVEN WITH THE SWC.
ATTENTION WILL NOW BE FOCUSING ON THE ALL-IMPORTANT
WEEK-LONG MADRID AND CATALUNYA ELECTIONS, STARTING JAN.
23 AND JAN. 30 RESPECTIVELY. STABLER

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